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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-third session

Summary record (partial)* of the 1373rd meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 15 February 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Hayashi

Contents

Opening of the session

Statement by the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the sixty-second and sixty-third sessions of the Committee

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

Follow-up to the consideration of reports submitted under article 18 of the Convention

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the sixty-third session of the Committee.

Statement by the representative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

2. **Mr. Nowosad** (Human Rights Treaties Division) said that the Office was looking at ways of ensuring that human rights mechanisms could be used more strategically to help Member States meet their commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To that end, treaty body concluding observations directly relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals should form an integral part of the country review of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Moreover, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals accountability architecture, States parties should be requested to include recommendations from the treaty bodies, special procedures and the universal periodic review process in their reports if they related directly to the target, even if they did not relate directly to the priority indicator. The Office was therefore upgrading the Universal Human Rights Index so that concluding observations and recommendations could be indexed to the Sustainable Development Goals, which should enable information to be easily uploaded for reviews of the Goals by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Moreover, the President of the Council should communicate the outcome of country reviews to the international human rights mechanisms so that they could take it into account when implementing their mandates and thus help reinforce the implementation of the recommendations of the high-level political forum through their respective activities. Reports on the Goals should, in any case, form part of the background information for treaty body country reviews.

3. An example of the linking of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the relevant international human rights instruments was the recent preliminary mapping by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) of the current Sustainable Development Goal indicators against the nine clusters of rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To strengthen the role of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in the follow-up and review process for the Goals, UNICEF proposed to bring the relevant targets and indicators of the Goals closer to the reporting cycle of that Committee. It was also suggested that the reporting guidelines for that Committee should be reviewed with a view to including the Goals in its lists of issues, dialogues with States parties and concluding observations, as had recently occurred in the case of Haiti.

4. Linking the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had great potential in providing increased accountability and alignment among the various processes to assist States in meeting their human rights obligations and their political commitments on women's rights and gender equality.

5. The Assembly of the African Union having declared 2016 the African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women, the Office of the High Commissioner would shortly deploy a gender adviser to its Regional Office in Addis Ababa. Moreover, the Office had organized a parallel session during the first African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa, held on 26-27 November 2015. The session, which had focused on the role of regional and international human rights mechanisms in addressing child and forced marriage, had involved two United Nations special procedures mechanisms — the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of

slavery, including its causes and consequences — and two African Union mechanisms. The parallel session had provided a good example of interregional cooperation.

6. From 18 to 22 January 2016, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child pornography and child prostitution, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery and the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health had conducted a five-day visit to Nigeria to assess measures taken by the Government to assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children who had escaped or been liberated from Boko Haram captivity. In their preliminary observations, the Special Rapporteurs had commended the initiatives by the Government but noted a protection gap, especially in service delivery and access to justice for women and girl victims of Boko Haram, and a lack of information on the steps taken to find abducted persons, in particular the schoolgirls abducted from Chibok. They had called on the Government to address impunity for sexual violence, including child and forced marriage, to ensure that rehabilitation and reintegration measures were grounded in human rights norms and addressed stigma, ostracism and rejection of women and children who had been held captive by Boko Haram and to ensure that all schools were reopened promptly, so that all children, particularly girls, could have access to free and good-quality primary education without fear.

7. During the twenty-sixth African Union Summit held in January 2015 in Addis Ababa, the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, had held meetings with the African Union Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security and with several African Union member States, at which he had emphasized the Committee's potential role as an accountability mechanism for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. He had also stressed the importance of the ratification of the Convention by all States in the region and their engagement in the reporting process.

8. After drawing attention to General Assembly resolution 70/176, entitled "Taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls", he invited the Committee to look at the report of the Secretary-General on the outcome of the meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental expert group on gender-related killing of women and girls (E/CN.15/2015/16), held in Bangkok from 11 to 13 November 2014. General Assembly resolution 70/219, entitled "Women in development", and resolution 70/132, entitled "Improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas", were of direct relevance to the Committee's draft general recommendation on rural women. In addition, General Assembly resolution 70/212 had proclaimed 11 February of each year the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, which echoed the Committee's recommendations to States parties that they should encourage women and girls to choose non-traditional fields of study, such as science.

9. In response to a call by the Government of Costa Rica at the twenty-seventh meeting of the Chairs of human rights treaty bodies in June 2015 for academic institutions worldwide to develop innovative proposals for the review of the treaty body system to be held by the General Assembly in 2020, the Geneva Academy had organized a brainstorming meeting of academics from various parts of the world in December 2015 and was launching an independent research process.

10. The English version of the *Handbook for Human Rights Treaty Body Members*, first proposed by the former High Commissioner, Ms. Pillay, in 2012, had been published and the other language versions would be ready soon. The *Handbook* should assist States parties in nominating and electing competent and independent members of treaty bodies.

11. The Secretariat's capacity to service the Committee's session was stretched, owing to an increasing workload and the temporary absences of some colleagues. The

distribution of hard copy documentation had therefore been substantially reduced, the aim being to have paper-smart sessions for all treaty bodies by 1 January 2017. All documentation could be easily accessed on the Committee's extranet page. As a transitional measure, a master file for each country could be consulted through the Secretariat.

12. **Ms. Schulz** said that she welcomed the fact that the human rights treaty bodies were considered important for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, but the added responsibility would create more work for the Committee and would affect how it asked questions and engaged in the constructive dialogue with States parties. She also welcomed the recognition of the Committee's importance to the women, peace and security agenda. However, she feared that, with the lack of adequate resources, the greening of the United Nations would come at the cost of the quality of work done to promote human rights.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/63/1)

13. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the sixty-second and sixty-third sessions of the Committee

14. **The Chair** said that, since the previous session, there had been no change in the number of States parties to the Convention, the number that had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) or the number that had ratified the Optional Protocol. Seven States parties — Guatemala, Kuwait, Montenegro, Nauru, Norway, Paraguay and Singapore — had submitted periodic reports and Burkina Faso had submitted a report in hard copy only. The Committee had acceded to the request of Liechtenstein and Mauritius that their overdue periodic reports should be submitted under the simplified reporting procedure.

15. Together with Ms. Acar, Ms. Bailey, Ms. Gabr and Ms. Haidar, she had participated in a workshop hosted by the Centre for Women, Peace and Security at the London School of Economics on 4 and 5 February 2016, entitled "Tackling violence against women: international and regional approaches", and in an expert group meeting on the Committee's draft general recommendation updating general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women, which had originally been adopted in 1992. At the workshop, she had spoken as a panellist on experiences of combating violence against women through litigation and Ms. Acar had spoken, as Chair of the working group in charge of updating general recommendation No. 19, on a panel discussing perspectives on drafting legal instruments aimed at tackling violence against women. Internationally renowned experts and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women had also participated.

16. On 30 and 31 January, Ms. Bailey and Ms. Halperin-Kaddari had participated in a symposium at the University of Ottawa organized by several Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, where they had spoken on the findings of the Committee's report on the inquiry concerning Canada published in March 2015. The meeting had been attended by the President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context.

17. On 1 February, the experts had met the three ministers in charge of designing the official national inquiry into the murder or disappearance of reportedly nearly 1,200

indigenous women and girls over the past three decades and had given a press conference.

18. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she had participated in the second international conference on women's rights in Sakarya University in Turkey in December. She had also made a presentation on the work of the Committee at an African regional workshop in Kenya for lawyers, where she had spoken on States parties' rights and obligations under the Convention.

19. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that, in addition to the activities mentioned by the Chair, she had co-written an article with Professor Marsha Freeman for the *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* on the Committee's work on gender neutrality.

20. **Ms. Schulz** said that she had spoken on a graduate institute programme for diplomats at the Human Rights Council on the international framework of women's rights. She had also spoken with French-speaking diplomats about the mechanisms for the protection of women's rights.

21. **Ms. Gabr** said that she had given lectures at the Egyptian Institute of Diplomatic Studies on trafficking and illegal migration, particularly as they concerned women. She had also spoken at the Cairo Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa on the occasion of the resumption of the parliamentary session in Egypt and given television interviews on women's participation in public life.

22. **Ms. Haidar** said that, in addition to the activities mentioned by the Chair, she had, together with Ms. Chalal, attended a regional conference in Qatar on 13-14 January organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the role of the Office in protecting human rights in the Arab region. The discussion had focused on the treaty body system and how the Arab region could contribute more effectively to it. She had also worked with Syrian displaced women and refugees in Lebanon with a view to enhancing their protection and combating violence against them.

23. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that she had been invited to attend an interagency meeting on indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Panama in December 2015, which she had addressed on the rights of indigenous women. On an informal visit to Mexico with a member of the Committee on Migrant Workers, she had spoken with representatives of State bodies and civil society organizations on the protection of migrant women.

24. **Ms. Pimentel** said that she had spoken at universities, schools and the São Paolo School of Judges about abortion, which continued to be a controversial issue in her country. She had also participated in the translation of general recommendation No. 24 into Portuguese.

25. **Ms. Chalal** said that she had participated, along with many other experts, in discussions on draft legislation relating to violence against women in Algeria. As a member of the Committee, she had stressed that the clause allowing the survivor of domestic violence to pardon the perpetrator could be prejudicial and counterproductive. She had argued for its removal and still the issue was under consideration.

26. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that she continued to work on the link between the Committee and UN-Women and often gave talks at high schools and army training schools. She had also held discussions with NGOs concerning the presentation of the forthcoming report of Italy to the Committee.

27. **Ms. Bailey** said that, in addition to the activities mentioned by the Chair, she had made the introductory remarks at workshops on the training of trainers in treaty body

capacity-building held in several Caribbean countries, the United States of America and Canada.

28. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that she had participated in a conference in the South Caucasus on the implementation of the Convention in the region.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

29. **Ms. Jahan**, introducing the report of the Chair of the pre-sessional working group for the sixty-third session, said that the working group had met from 27 to 30 July 2015 to prepare lists of issues and questions concerning the periodic reports of the Czech Republic, Haiti, Iceland, Japan, Mongolia, Sweden, the United Republic of Tanzania and Vanuatu. Particular attention had been paid to how those States parties had followed up the Committee's previous concluding observations. The group had received written and oral information from entities and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and from NGOs. The finalized lists of issues and questions had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

Follow-up to the consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

30. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao, introducing the report of the Rapporteur on follow-up, said that, during the sixty-second session, she had met representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, whose responses had been positive. At the end of the session, follow-up letters outlining the outcome of assessments of follow-up reports had been sent to Algeria, Angola, Austria, Nepal and Togo. First reminders about overdue follow-up reports had been sent to Afghanistan, Cabo Verde, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Serbia and Syria. Second reminders had been sent to the Comoros and Equatorial Guinea. The Committee had received follow-up reports from Bosnia and Herzegovina with a 1-month delay, Cuba with a 3-month delay, Greece with an 8-month delay, Panama with a 42-month delay, Samoa with a 15-month delay, South Africa with a 31-month delay and Tajikistan 1 month ahead of time. The Committee had also received additional information from Lesotho with an 11-month delay. She invited the country rapporteurs for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Panama, Tajikistan and Lesotho to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports. She also asked for volunteers to assist in the assessment of follow-up reports sent by Cuba and South Africa.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.45 a.m.